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Analytical Paper

Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada

The Arab Community in Canada

2001

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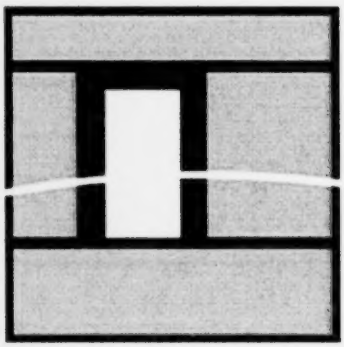

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Symbols

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p}	preliminary
^{r}	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E}	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

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Information on the series

This report was prepared by the Target Groups Project of Statistics Canada. This report is part of a series of profiles which will include profiles of the East Indian, Filipino, Haitian, Jamaican, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Lebanese and Vietnamese communities in Canada, as well as profile of Canadians of African, Latin American, Caribbean, South Asian and West Asian origin.

Ordering print copies

For more information on this series or to order more copies of this profile or any of the other profiles in this series, contact the Multiculturalism Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage at 1-888-77MULTI (1-888-776-8584) or 819-953-1970. The report is also available free of charge on the Statistics Canada website at: http://www.statcan.ca.

Questions or comments

For questions or comments about the content of this report, please contact Statistics Canada at 613-951-2603; fax 613-951-0387 or e-mail lindcol@statcan.ca.

Highlights

- Almost 350,000 people of Arab origin live in Canada, representing just over 1% of the total Canadian population.

- The majority of Canadians of Arab origin were born outside of Canada. As well, most foreign-born Arab Canadians immigrated to Canada in the last twenty years.

- Canadians of Arab origin make up 4% of the populations of Montreal and Ottawa.

- The Arab population living in Canada is relatively young; in 2001, 44% of all Canadians of Arab descent were under the age of 25, compared with 33% of the overall population. On the other hand, those in the Arab community are less than half as likely as all Canadians to be seniors aged 65 or over.

- Almost all Canadians of Arab descent can carry on a conversation in one or both official languages; in fact, only 4% cannot speak either English or French.

- The Arab community in Canada is evenly split between those who report they belong to a Christian religious grouping and those that report they are Muslim.

- People of Arab origin are somewhat more likely than those in the overall population to be married, while they are less likely to live in a common-law relationship. Canadians of Arab origin are also less likely to live alone.

- The Arab community in Canada is relatively well educated. In 2001, 30% of those of Arab origin had a university degree, compared with 15% of people in the overall population.

- People of Arab descent are less likely to be employed than their counterparts in the overall population. At the same time, labour force participants of Arab origin are considerably more likely than those in the overall population to be unemployed.

- The average income of Canadians of Arab origin is over $3,000 lower than the national average.

- Children of Arab origin are twice as likely as their counterparts in the overall population to live in low-income families.

Introduction

This report describes the basic social and economic characteristics of people in Canada who have ethnic or cultural ancestry in the Middle East or North Africa. It is part of a series of profiles of the country's major non-European ethnic groups.

The information in this profile is taken mostly from the 2001 Census of Canada, the most recent source of census data. Statistics Canada conducts the Census every five years. One in five households receives a long questionnaire that asks household residents to indicate the ethnic or cultural groups to which their ancestors belonged. This profile is based on people who reported origins of the Middle East or North Africa, including: Arab, Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Libyan, Maghrebi, Algerian, Berber, Moroccan, Tunisian, Palestinian, Saudi Arabian, Syrian and Yemeni. The origin could be listed as the only ethnic or cultural group of their ancestors, or listed along with other ethnic and cultural groups.

This publication also uses information from the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), which was conducted in 2002 by Statistics Canada in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage. The EDS surveyed more than 42,000 Canadians over the age of 15. The objectives of the EDS were to understand more about how people's backgrounds affect their participation in Canadian society, economy and culture, and how Canadians from different ethnic backgrounds think about and describe their ethnicity.

Although the EDS and the Census provide very useful information, caution should be exercised in making direct comparisons between groups, particularly as they relate to causal implications, because the data have not been weighted to take into account differences in age, education, length of time in Canada and other factors.

This profile is based on the Census population, which includes the following groups:

- Canadian citizens (by birth or by naturalization) and landed immigrants with a usual place of residence in Canada (including those who are abroad, either on a military base or attached to a diplomatic mission; or who are at sea or in port aboard merchant vessels under Canadian registry).
- Persons with a usual place of residence in Canada who are claiming refugee status and members of their families living with them.
- Persons with a usual place of residence in Canada who hold:
    - a student authorization (student visa or student permit);
    - an employment authorization; or
    - a Minister's permit (including extensions);
    - and members of their families living with them.

For the purposes of this profile, the term "Canadians" includes all persons with a usual place of residence in Canada, regardless of their citizenship status.

The Arab Community in Canada

A growing community

Canadians of Arab origin[1] make up one of the largest non-European ethnic group in Canada. In 2001, almost 350,000 people of Arab origin lived in Canada, representing 1.2% of the total Canadian population.

Table 1

Selected ethnic groups in Canada, other than English, French and Canadian, 2001

	Total population	Multiple responses	Single responses	As a proportion of the total Canadian population
		thousands		percentage
South Asian	963.2	160.9	802.3	3.2
Caribbean	503.8	180.2	323.6	1.7
Arab	**348.0**	**109.4**	**238.6**	**1.2**
African	294.7	110.0	184.7	1.0
Latin American	244.4	94.3	150.1	0.8
West Asian	205.0	47.8	157.1	0.7

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

The number of people in Canada of Arab origin is growing considerably faster than the overall population. Between 1996 and 2001, for example, the number of people who reported Arab origins rose by 27%, while the overall population grew by only 4%.

The Lebanese are the largest group within the Arab-Canadian community. In 2001, 41% of all those with Arab roots said they were Lebanese, while 12% were Egyptian, 6% were Syrian, 6% were Moroccan, 6% were Iraqi, 4% were Algerian and another 4% were Palestinian.

The majority of Canadians of Arab origin have only one ethnic origin. In 2001, 69% of all those who reported an Arab origin reported only one ethnic origin, while 31% reported multiple ethnic origins. In contrast, almost 40% of the overall Canadian population reported multiple ethnic roots.

The majority are foreign-born

The majority of the Arab population living in Canada was born outside the country. In 2001, 58% of Canadians who reported an Arab origin were born outside of Canada, compared with only 18% of the overall population.

As well, most immigrants of Arab origin arrived in Canada relatively recently. Of foreign-born Arabs living in Canada in 2001, 54% had arrived in the previous decade, while another 25% came to Canada between 1981 and 1990. In contrast, only about 7% of immigrants of Arab origin arrived in the 1960s, while just 1% came to Canada before 1961.

1. All statistical information in this publication referring to Arabs, or to people or Canadians of Arab origin, denotes people who reported Arab (or an origin that originates in the region commonly referred to as the Arab world), either alone or in combination with other ethnic origins in response to the question on ethnic origin in the 2001 Census or 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey.

Most live in two provinces

The large majority of the Canadian population of Arab origin live in either Ontario or Quebec. In 2001, Ontario was home to 43% of the overall Arab community in Canada, while another 39% lived in Quebec. At the same time, 8% lived in Alberta, 4% lived in British Columbia and 3% resided in Nova Scotia. That year, almost 150,000 people of Arab descent lived in Ontario and 136,000 lived in Quebec, while 28,000 resided in Alberta, 15,000 made British Columbia their home and 9,400 resided in Nova Scotia.

Canadians of Arab origin in Quebec make up a larger percentage of the provincial population than they do in any other province or territory. In 2001, almost 2% of the population of Quebec reported they had Arab origins, while the figure was about 1% in each of Ontario, Nova Scotia and Alberta. In the remaining provinces and territories, people of Arab descent made up less than a half a per cent of the overall population.

Table 2
The Arab population in Canada, by province and territory, 2001

	Total Arab population	The provincial/territorial population	As a proportion of the total Arab population in Canada
	thousands	percentage	
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.9	0.2	0.3
Prince Edward Island	0.7	0.4	0.2
Nova Scotia	9.4	1.1	2.7
New Brunswick	3.1	0.4	0.9
Quebec	135.7	1.9	39.0
Ontario	149.4	1.3	43.0
Manitoba	3.2	0.3	0.9
Saskatchewan	2.4	0.2	0.7
Alberta	28.0	1.0	8.0
British Columbia	14.9	0.4	4.3
Yukon	0.0	0.2	0.0
Northwest Territories	0.1	0.4	0.0
Nunavut	0.0	0.1	0.0
Canada	**348.0**	**1.2**	**100.0**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Over half of all Canadians of Arab origin live in either Montreal or Toronto; in fact, the largest Arab community in Canada resides in Montreal. In 2001, close to 125,000 people of Arab descent, 36% of the total Arab population in Canada, lived in Montreal, while another 72,000, 21% of the total, resided in Toronto. That year, people of Arab descent made up 4% of the population of Montreal, while they also made up 4% of the population of Ottawa. At the same time, people with Arab origins made up 2% of the populations of both Toronto and Halifax and 1% of those in both Calgary and Edmonton.

A young population

The Arab community in Canada is relatively young. In 2001, children under the age of 15 made up 29% of those who reported an Arab origin, compared with 19% of the overall population. At the

same time, 16% were young adults aged 15 to 24, versus 13% of the overall population. Similarly, 34% of the Arab community, compared with 31% of the overall population, were in their prime working years between the ages of 25 and 44.

Table 3
Age distribution of the Arab community and overall Canadian population, 2001

	Arab community			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
	percentage					
Age group						
Under 15	27.8	29.8	28.7	20.2	18.6	19.4
15 to 24	15.6	15.8	15.7	14.0	13.0	13.4
25 to 44	34.5	33.7	34.1	30.4	30.6	30.5
45 to 64	17.4	15.1	16.3	24.4	24.4	24.4
65 and over	4.7	5.6	5.1	10.9	13.4	12.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Total population in thousands	**185.2**	**162.8**	**348.0**	**14,564.3**	**15,074.8**	**29,639.0**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

In contrast, Canadians of Arab origin are less likely than those in the overall population to be either seniors or approaching retirement age. In 2001, people aged 65 and over made up only 5% of those who reported an Arab origin, compared with 12% of all Canadians. Similarly, 16% of people who reported Arab origins were aged 45 to 64, versus 24% of the overall population.

In contrast to the overall population, men make up the majority of Canadians of Arab origin. In 2001, 53% of people of Arab origin were male, compared with 49% of the overall population. Women, though, make up a slight majority of seniors of Arab origin. That year, women represented 51% of people of Arab origin aged 65 and over, although this is lower than the figure in the overall population where women made up 56% of seniors.

Most can converse in an official language

Almost all Canadians of Arab origin can carry on a conversation in at least one official language.[2] In 2001, 96% reported they could converse in one or both official languages, while only 4% could not speak either English or French.

While almost all Canadians of Arab origin can speak at least one official language, the majority have a mother tongue[3] other than English or French. In 2001, 57% of those who reported an Arab origin said that their mother tongue was a non-official language. At the same time, 26% reported that their mother tongue was English and 17% reported that it was French. Among the non-official languages reported as mother tongue by those in the Arab community, the most common was Arabic.

2. English and French are recognized as Canada's official languages in the *Official Languages Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

3. A mother tongue is the language that a person learns first in childhood and that they still understand.

A substantial number of Canadians of Arab origin also speak a language other than English or French at home. In 2001, 34% of people who reported they had Arab origins said that they spoke only a non-official language in their home.

Almost all Canadians of Arab origin who are employed speak English or French on the job. In 2001, only 2% of employed Canadians of Arab origin said they spoke only a non-official language at work, while another 2% regularly used a non-official language in combination with English or French on the job.

Religion

Canadians of Arab origin are equally divided among those who report being Muslim or belonging to a Christian religious group. In 2001, 44% of Canadians of Arab origin reported they were Muslim, while another 44% belonged to a Christian faith group. That year, 28% said they were Catholic, 11% belonged to a Christian Orthodox sect, and 5% belonged to a mainline Protestant denomination. Relatively few Canadians of Arab origin have no religious affiliation. In 2001, just 6% said they had no religious affiliation, compared with 17% of the overall population.

Family status

Canadians of Arab origin are generally more likely than other Canadians to be married. In 2001, 53% of people aged 15 and over who reported an Arab origin were married, compared with 50% of all Canadian adults. In contrast, Canadians of Arab origin are less likely than other Canadians to live in common-law relationships. That year, just 4% of adults of Arab origin were living common-law, compared with 10% of adults in the overall population.

Canadian adults of Arab origin are also slightly less likely than other adults to be lone parents. In 2001, 4% of Arab Canadians aged 15 and over were lone parents, compared with 6% of those in the overall population. As with the rest of the population, the large majority of lone parents of Arab origin are women. Among lone parents who reported Arab origin that year 83% were female, while in the overall population, women represented 81% of all lone parents.

Table 4
Family status of the Arab community and overall population aged 15 and over, by sex, 2001

	Arab community			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
	percentage					
Married	52.1	54.7	53.3	51.0	48.3	49.6
Living common-law	3.9	3.0	3.5	10.0	9.4	9.7
Lone parent	1.4	8.0	4.4	2.1	8.7	5.5
Child living at home	23.9	21.2	22.7	19.0	14.0	16.4
Living with relatives	3.4	3.8	3.6	1.9	2.6	2.3
Living with non-relatives	4.7	1.9	3.4	4.7	3.3	4.0
Living alone	10.6	7.3	9.1	11.3	13.7	12.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Canadians of Arab origin are less likely than other adults to live alone. In 2001, 9% of Arab Canadians aged 15 and over lived alone, compared with 13% of all Canadian adults. Seniors of Arab origin are also less likely than their counterparts in the overall population to live alone. In 2001, 20% of people of Arab origin aged 65 and over lived alone, compared with 29% of all Canadian seniors.

On the other hand, seniors of Arab origin are more likely than other seniors to live with members of their extended family. In 2001, 12% of Arab Canadians aged 65 and over lived with relatives, such as the family of a son or daughter, whereas only 5% of all Canadian seniors lived with relatives.

Education

Canadians of Arab origin are twice as likely as other Canadians to have a university degree. In 2001, 30% of Canadians of Arab origin aged 15 and over had either a bachelor's or post-graduate degree, compared with 15% of the overall adult population. Canadian adults of Arab origin are also more than twice as likely as their counterparts in the overall population to have a post-graduate degree. In 2001, 10% of Arab Canadians had either a Master's degree or a Doctorate, compared with 5% of all Canadian adults.

As in the overall population, men of Arab origin have somewhat more education than women of Arab origin. In 2001, 34% of men of Arab origin had a university degree, compared with 25% of their female counterparts. Both men and women of Arab origin, though, were considerably more likely than their counterparts in the overall population to have a degree.

Table 5
Educational attainment of the Arab community and overall Canadian population aged 15 and over, by sex, 2001

	Arab community			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
			percentage			
Less than high school	20.3	25.7	22.8	31.4	31.1	31.3
High school graduate	10.1	13.3	11.5	13.1	15.1	14.1
Some postsecondary	12.3	12.9	12.6	10.7	11.0	10.8
Trades certificate/diploma	7.8	5.7	6.8	14.1	7.8	10.9
College graduate	11.4	12.7	12.0	12.5	17.3	15.0
University certificate/diploma below bachelor's degree	4.4	4.7	4.5	2.1	2.9	2.5
Bachelor's degree	20.5	18.1	19.4	10.6	10.6	10.6
Post-graduate degree	13.2	7.0	10.3	5.4	4.2	4.8
Total with university degree	33.7	25.0	29.7	16.0	14.9	15.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Young people of Arab origin are also considerably more likely than other young Canadians to be attending school. In 2001, 74% of young people of Arab origin aged 15 to 24 were enrolled in a full-time educational program, compared with 57% of all Canadians in this age group.

In contrast to their counterparts in the overall population, young men of Arab origin are more likely than young women to be attending school. In 2001, 75% of men of Arab origin aged 15 to 24 were enrolled in a full-time educational program, compared with 73% of their female counterparts. In the overall population, young women are more likely to be in school than young men.

Employment

Canadians of Arab origin are generally less likely to be employed than adults in the rest of the population. In 2001, 56% of people of Arab origin aged 15 and over were employed, compared with 62% of all Canadian adults.

As in the overall population, Arab men are somewhat more likely than their female counterparts to be employed outside the home. In 2001, 65% of men of Arab origin aged 15 and over were part of the paid workforce, compared with 46% of adult women of Arab origin. In fact, men of Arab origin are almost as likely to be employed as men in the overall population, while women of Arab origin are considerably less likely to be employed than their counterparts in the overall population.

Table 6
Percentage of the population employed, by age group and sex, 2001

	Arab community			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
			percentage			
Age group						
15 to 24	46.8	43.1	45.1	56.1	55.6	55.9
25 to 44	76.1	54.0	65.9	85.6	75.2	80.3
45 to 64	72.0	48.0	61.7	74.8	60.8	67.7
65 and over	17.7	5.8	11.6	13.0	4.8	8.4
Total	**65.0**	**46.4**	**56.4**	**67.2**	**56.1**	**61.5**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

Unemployment

Labour force participants[4] of Arab origin are much more likely to be unemployed than labour force participants in the general population. In 2001, 12.3% of labour force participants of Arab origin were unemployed, compared with 7.4% of those in the overall population.

As in the overall population, young people of Arab origin are more likely to be unemployed than older adults. In 2001, 17% of male labour force participants of Arab origin aged 15 to 24 were unemployed, compared with 14% of all Canadian males in this category. At the same time, 15% of young female labour force participants of Arab origin were unemployed, compared with 13% of their counterparts in the general population.

4. Adults (aged 15 and over) who are employed or who are unemployed and looking for work.

Income

Canadians of Arab origin generally have lower incomes than the national average. In 2000,[5] Canadians of Arab origin had an average income from all sources of $26,500, over $3,000 less than the figure for all Canadians.

Table 7
Average incomes of the Arab community and overall Canadian population, by age group and sex, 2000

	Arab community			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
			dollars			
Age group						
15 to 24	9,511	8,235	8,922	11,273	9,046	10,182
25 to 44	33,941	21,484	28,355	40,450	26,306	33,308
45 to 64	44,580	23,443	36,010	46,955	26,767	37,026
65 and over	31,943	19,141	25,466	30,775	19,461	24,437
Total	**32,336**	**19,264**	**26,519**	**36,865**	**22,885**	**29,769**

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.

As in the overall population, women of Arab origin have lower incomes than their male counterparts. In 2000, the average income for adult women of Arab origin aged 15 and over was just over $19,000, over $13,000 less than the figure for men of Arab origin. Indeed, the income gap between women and men of Arab origin is somewhat greater than the difference in the overall population. That year, the incomes of women of Arab origin were only 60% those of their male counterparts, while the figure in the overall population was 62%.

In contrast to younger adults, seniors of Arab origin have slightly higher incomes than overall population aged 65 and over. In 2000, the average income from all sources for people of Arab origin aged 65 and over was $25,500, about $1,000 more than the average income of seniors nationally. As with all seniors in Canada, though, senior women of Arab origin have lower incomes than their male counterparts. That year, the average income for women of Arab origin aged 65 and over was just over $19,000, compared with almost $32,000 for male seniors of Arab origin.

Canadians of Arab origin receive a larger share of their income from earnings[6] than those in the overall population. In 2000, people who reported they were of Arab descent said that 81% of their income came from earnings, while the figure for all Canadians was 77%.

At the same time, people of Arab origin receive roughly the same share of their total income from government transfer programs as other Canadians. In 2000, 11% of the income of Canadians of Arab origin aged 15 and over came from government transfers, while for all Canadian adults the figure was 12%.

5. In the Census, people report their income for the previous year.

6. Earnings are total wages and salaries and net income from self-employment.

Many with low incomes

On average, Canadians of Arab origin are much more likely than people in the overall population to have incomes that fall below Statistics Canada's Low-income Cut-offs. In 2000, 35% of people who reported an Arab origin were considered as having low incomes, compared with 16% of the overall Canadian population.

Children of Arab origin living in Canada are even more likely to be classified as living in a low-income family. In 2000, 40% of children of Arab origin under the age of 15 lived in families with incomes below the Low-income Cut-offs; this was more than twice the figure for all children in Canada, 19% of whom lived in families with low incomes that year.

Unattached Canadians of Arab origin are also particularly likely to have low incomes. In 2000, 52% of people of Arab origin aged 15 and over who lived alone had low incomes, compared with 38% of their counterparts in the overall population.

Seniors of Arab origin who live alone are particularly likely to have low incomes. In 2000, 57% of unattached people of Arab origin aged 65 and over had incomes below the Low-income Cut-offs, compared with 40% of all Canadian seniors who lived alone.

Senior women of Arab origin who live alone are the most likely to have low incomes. In 2000, 62% of unattached women of Arab origin aged 65 and over had incomes below the Low-income Cut-offs, compared with 45% of unattached male seniors of Arab origin and 43% of unattached female seniors in the overall population.

Most feel a sense of belonging to Canada

According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey, a large majority of Canadians of Arab origin feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada. In 2002, 88% of those who reported Arab origin said that they had a strong sense of belonging to Canada. At the same time, 52% said that they had a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic or cultural group.

Canadians of Arab origin are also active in Canadian society. For example, 69% of those who were eligible to vote reported doing so in the 2000 federal election, while 71% said they voted in the last provincial election. Similarly, in 2002, 39% reported that they had participated in an organization such as a sports team or community association in the 12 months preceding the survey.

At the same time, though, one in four Canadians of Arab origin has experienced discrimination. In 2002, 26% of Canadians of Arab descent said they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment based on their ethnicity, race, religion, language or accent in the past five years, or since they arrived in Canada. A majority (53%) of those who had experienced discrimination said that they felt it was based on their race or skin colour, and 54% said that the discrimination took place at work or when applying for a job or promotion.

Summary table

	People of Arab origin			Total Canadian population		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total population in thousands	**185.2**	**162.8**	**348.0**	**14,564.3**	**15,074.8**	**29,639.0**
Percentage change between 1996 to 2001	25.7	28.3	26.9	3.7	4.1	3.9
Percentage immigrant	59.6	56.9	58.4	18.0	18.7	18.4
Percentage with Canadian citizenship	80.0	80.7	80.3	94.9	94.5	94.7
Language						
Percentage able to speak English/French	97.2	95.2	96.3	98.8	98.2	98.4
Percentage speaking only non-official language at home	32.5	34.9	33.7	9.6	9.9	9.7
Age distribution						
Percentage aged less than 15	27.8	29.8	28.7	20.2	18.6	19.4
Percentage aged 25 to 44	34.5	33.7	34.1	30.4	30.6	30.5
Percentage aged 65 and over	4.7	5.6	5.1	10.9	13.4	12.2
Family status						
Percentage lone parents[1]	1.4	8.0	4.4	2.1	8.7	5.5
Percentage living alone[1]	10.6	7.3	9.1	11.3	13.7	12.5
Percentage seniors living alone	12.2	27.8	20.2	16.8	38.3	28.9
Education, employment and income						
Percentage with university degree[1]	33.7	25.0	29.7	16.0	14.9	15.4
Percentage employed[1]	65.0	46.4	56.4	67.2	56.1	61.5
Unemployment rate	12.0	12.9	12.3	7.6	7.2	7.4
Percentage with low income	34.1	35.0	34.5	14.7	17.7	16.2

1. Includes people aged 15 and over.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada.